# PHILOSOPHIES AND EDUCATIONAL PRACTICES OF THE NONGRADED PRIMARY SCHOOLS OF IOWA: A SURVEY

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A Field Report

Presented to

The School of Graduate Studies

Drake University

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In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Science in Education

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by

Virginia Torrey Kayser

August 1970

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Approved by Committee:

Chairman

R. L. Evans

Dean of the School of Graduate Studies

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# CHAPTER I

## THE PROBLEM AND DEFINITIONS OF TERMS USED

Early in the twentieth century, the intelligence testing movement was in full swing. Psychometricians brought to light the extreme differences found in the ability of children to learn. It was found that not only hereditary differences but also environmental factors had a great deal to do with the child's success in school. In fact, environmental conditions were found to be more important than earlier supposed.

Despite the knowledge of individual differences, children are still treated very much as if they are all alike. The graded school which groups by chronological age still persists. In too many cases individual differences are not recognized and provided for. Educators are deeply concerned and are striving to remedy this situation. Experimentation to find improved teaching methods is being conducted. Innovations are being tested.

One innovation that appears to hold promise in improving the chance of educating each pupil to his potential is the nongraded organizational plan as developed by Goodlad and Anderson. In the nongraded plan each child is placed at a skill level in which he can successfully perform. By careful diagnosis and prescribed skill

development, the child can advance through the levels as quickly or slowly as his developmental stage allows. A slow child is not pushed to the frustration point nor is an adept child held back. This individualized teaching seems to be more in accord with knowledge gained about child development.[1]

It is true that diagnosis, prescribed learning and individualized teaching can be done in a graded school; however, many feel that the nongraded organizational plan encourages more diagnosis, prescribed learning and individualization. Since the nongraded plan does not set the same standards of achievement for all children to complete in one year, there is not the frustration of failure experienced as when group standards are set.

Although the theory of the nongraded organizational plan for schools appears to be a wholesome and beneficial one, the difficulties of implementation and administration often discourage school personnel from tackling such a project. Some school districts adopt this type of plan and find it extremely difficult, if not impossible, to actually drop their traditional lock-step designs. Other schools report a very successful adoption and administration of the nongraded plan.

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[1]John I. Goodlad and Robert H. Anderson, The Nongraded Elementary School (revised edition; New York: Harcourt Brace and World, Inc., 1963), p. 159.

# I. THE PROBLEM

Statement of the problem. It was the purpose of this study to investigate and report on the nongraded organizational plan as to the: (1) definition of the nongraded plan, (2) history of the nongraded plan in the United States, (3) research evidence in support of and against the plan, (4) progress of the nongraded primary plan adoption in the schools of Iowa, (5) extent of successful implementation of this plan in the schools of Iowa, and (6) recommendations for implementation and conduction of a nongraded organizational plan.

Importance and need of the study. The President's Commission on National Goals stated:

> Our devotion to equality does not ignore the fact that individuals differ greatly in their talents and motivations. It simply asserts that each should be enabled to develop to the full, in his own style and to his own limit. Each is worthy of respect as a human being. This means that there must be diverse programs within the educational system to take care of the diversity of individuals; and that each of these programs should be accorded respect and stature.[1]

Miller, who reported the recommendations of leading educators stated:

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[1] Goals for Americans (Report of the President's Commission on National Goals. Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1960), p. 81.

> The vertical organization of the school should provide for the continuous, unbroken, upward progression of all learners, with due recognition of the wide variability among learners in every aspect of their development. The school organization should, therefore, provide for differentiated rates and means of progression toward achievement of educational goals.
>
> Nongrading and multigrading are promising alternatives to the traditional graded school and should be given careful consideration in seeking to provide flexible progress plans geared to human variability.[1]

Citizens everywhere are concerned about the children who go through the schools without learning the necessary skills they need to make a successful adjustment to society. The frustrations of failure and repetition of grades leave these pupils with poor self-concepts and negative attitudes. Educators are diligently seeking techniques of improving the achievement of these pupils who, for some reason, do not learn as readily as the majority.

Conversely, there is concern for those who achieve at a greater rate than the average and become bored with school when they are not challenged to go beyond their grade level. The nongraded school plan has been proposed as one innovation that may more adequately provide for all pupils.

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[1]Richard I. Miller (ed.), Education in a Changing Society (Project on the Instructional Program of the Public Schools. Washington, D. C.: National Education Association of the United States, 1964), p. 141.

Method of research. A research of the professional literature on the nongraded plan was conducted. Experimental studies were critically reviewed. The Iowa State Department of Public Instruction was contacted for a list of the school districts in Iowa which operate a nongraded organizational plan. Questionnaires were sent to an administrator and two teachers in each of the sixty districts listed. A total of 180 questionnaires was mailed out. One hundred twenty-five questionnaires were returned--a 69.4 per cent return. Of the respondents returning questionnaires, 37.6 per cent stated they did not have a nongraded school that would meet the definition of a nongraded plan set forth in this report. The data presented in this report were taken from the 62.4 per cent that utilize a nongraded primary plan somewhat similar to the plan defined in this report. The progress of the nongraded plan adoption in Iowa school districts was based upon the reports from the questionnaires that were returned. The report of the extent of successful implementation of this plan in Iowa schools was based upon the replies on the questionnaires. Recommendations for implementation and conduction of a nongraded organizational plan were based upon the respondents' comments and suggestions.

## II. DEFINITIONS OF TERMS USED

Nongraded organizational plan. Myers and Klein explained the nongraded plan as follows:

> In the nongraded classes the grouping of learners is determined by many criteria rather than a few or, as has often been the case, by one criterion--age. The nongraded pattern of organization allows each learner to develop his capabilities as far as he can without being hampered by grade barriers. A concept of skill is no longer the possession of a designated grade or age level, but is appropriate content for any learner when he is at that level of development.[1]

In the nongraded plan, the children should be taught with materials and curriculum designed for their level of development. They should be allowed to progress at a rate suitable to their ability.

Ungraded primary. Good defined the ungraded primary as a school with flexible grouping, regardless of age. He specified that there must be extensive effort to adapt instruction to individual differences.[2]

Generally the nongraded primary organization replaces the first three grades of school; however, some districts include the kindergarten in their nongraded primary.

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[1]Donald A. Myers and M. Frances Klein, "Educational Programs--Elementary Schools," Encyclopedia of Educational Research (fourth edition; London: Collier-Macmillan, Ltd., 1969), p. 406.

[2]Carter V. Good, Dictionary of Education (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1952), p. 586.

# CHAPTER II

## REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

### I. HISTORY OF THE NONGRADED SCHOOL

After the original settlers were established in America, they began to develop plans for the education of their children. The primary goal of education at that time was to teach the children to read so they would be able to study the scriptures. They had little to work with--no physical plants, practically no materials, and no trained teachers. The first schools were nongraded and attempted to serve the needs of pupils of all ages. A little later, local districts set up common schools for all who wished to attend. There were no set grades or standards.

In the first half of the nineteenth century, concern was expressed over the schools' lack of standards. State Boards were established to supervise schools and to assist in improving the quality of education. Horace Mann and others interested in upgrading education searched for a plan to improve the organization of schools. They found that Prussia had well-organized graded schools. At that time the graded school seemed to be the answer to their problems. The Prussian pattern was designed for a two-class system of society. The lower-class system pattern was adopted and

instituted into American schools where there existed a single-class democratic society.[1]

The Quincy Grammar School, which opened in 1848, set the pattern of the graded school. This graded plan was instrumental in unifying educational practices and in developing more standard curricula. Now, over one hundred twenty years later, this basic pattern is still the most widely-used organizational plan.

The graded plan had not existed long before educators began to question its merit. Shearer wrote, "The schools moved from no system to nothing but system."[2] The graded plan necessitated the adjustment of the child to the system instead of the adjustment of the system to the child.

As interest in child development and learning theory increased, so did the search for more adequate means of educating the individual. Various innovations designed to more successfully meet an individualized approach to education have been proposed.

Probably the most profound effort to break the lock-step has been the nongraded movement. The earliest attempt

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[1]John D. Russell, and Charles H. Judd, The American Educational System (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, Inc., 1940), p. 27.

[2]William J. Shearer, The Grading of Schools (New York: H. P. Smith Publishing Company, 1899), p. 21.

to ungrade the school was made in Western Springs, Illinois, in 1934.[1] This plan has since been discontinued. It appears that the plan begun in Milwaukee in 1942 is the oldest of the nongraded plans now in effect.[2] Very few schools attempted nongrading before 1947, but since that time the movement has grown quite rapidly.

## II. REVIEW OF THE RESEARCH

Goodlad aptly expressed the rationale for the intense interest in the nongraded organizational plan when he said:

> Graded structure suggests a relatively common sequence of learning tasks but lacks the virtue of facilitating continuous progress for learners of widely varying abilities. It is this lack above others that has motivated a century of attempts to modify the grade system.[3]

There is an abundance of literature on the nongraded school, but the number of empirically strong research studies that have been conducted on the nongraded plan is not large. Only the studies thought to be reasonably well controlled were included in this review.

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[1]Leonard B. Wheat, "The Flexible Group System," The Elementary School Journal, XXXVIII (November, 1937), 175-83.

[2]Florence C. Kelly, "The Primary School in Milwaukee," Childhood Education, XXIV (January, 1948), 236-38.

[3]John I. Goodlad, "Classroom Organization," Encyclopedia of Educational Research (third edition; New York: The Macmillan Company, 1960), p. 223.

There are quantities of reports of personal experiences with nongrading. Since these reports of personal experiences are highly subjective, they are not included in this review of the literature.

Goodlad surveyed the studies made up to 1960 comparing pupil achievement in graded and nongraded plans. He concluded that there were few valid studies made up to that time, due to failure to identify two sets of characteristics by which the graded and nongraded plans could be clearly differentiated. The variables were poorly defined and overlapped. Of the valid studies Goodlad surveyed, the nongraded plan was favored.[1]

In 1952, the Milwaukee study compared ninety-nine students from nongraded schools with 123 graded students. The test data revealed reading and personality adjustment slightly favored the nongraded groups although they were a little younger and tested lower in mental maturity.[2]

In 1955, Goodlad reported increased teacher awareness of individual differences and greater parental understanding of the schools as favorable results of the nongraded plan.[3]

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[1] Ibid., pp. 221-23.

[2] John I. Goodlad, "Classroom Organization," Encyclopedia of Educational Research (third edition; New York: The Macmillan Company, 1960), p. 123, citing The Schools, 1952, "A Study of Primary School Organization and Regular Class Organization at Primary 6 and 3A in Eight Schools."

[3] John I. Goodlad, "More About the Ungraded Unit Plan," National Education Association Journal, XLIV (1955), 295-96.

Austin, in 1957, reported reduced tension in students of the nongraded plan.[1]

In Appleton, Wisconsin, ten fourth grade groups were compared to three intermediate fourth year nongraded groups. The median over-all grade placement scores were 4.57 for the graded group and 4.83 for the nongraded group.[2]

Kennedy reported teachers were freed from fear of encroaching on materials reserved for the next grade and allowed to move bright youngsters forward in ungraded schools.[3]

Goodlad further concluded that the nongraded approach in many cases has proved quite effective and is worthy of further investigation.[4]

Di Lorenzo and Salter reviewed the studies of the nongraded organizational plan made from 1959 to 1965. They found there were fourteen studies made comparing the graded and nongraded plans. Six of these studies compared reading achievement, five compared arithmetic achievement, and there were three studies of spelling achievement.

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[1]Goodlad, citing Kent C. Austin, "The Ungraded Primary Unit in Public Schools of the United States," (Doctoral Dissertation, University of Colorado, 1957), p. 222.

[2]Goodlad citing The Schools, 1957, "History and Development of Our Continuous Progress Plan," p. 222.

[3]Goodlad citing Dora F. Kennedy, "Does the Nongraded School Better Meet the Aims of Elementary Education?" (Master's paper, University of Maryland, 1957), p. 222.

[4]Goodlad, loc. cit.

Of the six studies made comparing reading achievement, four found the performance of the nongraded pupils significantly superior to that of the graded pupils; one found no difference; and one found the graded control group significantly better than the nongraded experimental group. Of the five studies comparing arithmetic achievement, four found a significant advantage in favor of nongrading; the findings of the other study favored graded classes. All three comparisons on spelling achievement favored the nongraded groups.[1]

Halliwell compared 146 primary pupils taught approximately one year under the nongraded plan with 149 primary pupils who were taught the previous year in the same school under the graded plan. The Lorge-Thorndike Intelligence Test, Nonverbal Battery,[2] was used to measure intelligence quotient. There was no significant difference in intelligence quotient between the two groups. The California Achievement Test[3] was used to compare achievement scores of the two first-year

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[1]Louis T. Di Lorenzo and Ruth Salter, "Cooperative Research on the Nongraded Primary," The Elementary School Journal, LXV (February, 1965), 269-77.

[2]Irving Lorge and Robert L. Thorndike, The Lorge-Thorndike Intelligence Test (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, Inc., 1954).

[3]Ernest W. Tiegs and Willis W. Clark, The California Achievement Test (Monterey, California: The California Test Bureau, 1957).

groups. The first-year children of the nongraded group made significantly higher scores in word knowledge and reading comprehension at the .01 level of confidence. The second and third-year children were given The Metropolitan Achievement Test[1] and the nongraded children scored higher than the graded group, but the scores were not significantly different in reading.

In Halliwell's study there had been no effort to modify the curriculum or methodology of teaching; however, there were more requests for materials and the teachers appeared more aware of individual differences in the nongraded group. Although the study had been planned to compare only the organizational plans, a change in methods, materials, and teacher attitudes led the investigator to conclude that the change in achievement could not be attributed to a change in the organizational plan alone. Halliwell felt the nongraded plan proved effective and worthy of further investigation.[2]

Ingram tested the organizational plans rather than curricular changes and changes in methodology of teaching. The nongraded pupils were compared to former students and

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[1]Harold H. Bixler, et al., The Metropolitan Achievement Test (New York: Harcourt Brace and World, Inc., 1959).

[2]Joseph W. Halliwell, "A Comparison of Pupil Achievement in Graded and Nongraded Primary Classrooms," The Journal of Experimental Education, XXXII (Fall, 1963), 59-63.

other contemporary pupils in the same city under the graded plan. The study compared the achievement scores of sixty-eight children who were completing their third year in the primary cycle at Washington School in Flint, Michigan, with 337 children who had completed third grade in 1956, 1957, and 1958 in the same school. Differences in four mean scores; paragraph meaning, word meaning, spelling, and language, on The Stanford Achievement Test, Elementary Battery,[1] favored pupils in the primary cycle over the graded pupils at the .01 level or better. Later the scores of all third graders, 3,314 pupils, in Flint Public Schools were compared to the scores of the sixty-eight children who had just completed the primary cycle. Differences in the four mean scores favored the pupils in the primary cycle at the .01 level.[2]

Skapski conducted a three-part study to compare the reading achievement of the nongraded school with the reading achievement of the graded school. Three schools in Burlington, Vermont, took part in the study. School number one was non-graded in reading only. Schools number two and three were graded throughout. The first part of the study was done only

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[1]Truman L. Kelley, et al., The Stanford Achievement Test (New York: Harcourt Brace and World, Inc., 1957).

[2]Vivien Ingram, "Flint Evaluates Its Primary Cycle," The Elementary School Journal, LXI (November, 1960), 76-80.

in school number one. The reading achievement, nongraded, was compared with the same pupils' progress in arithmetic, which was graded. The Stanford Achievement Test, Elementary Battery,[1] was used. The paragraph meaning test was used to measure reading achievement and the arithmetic computation test was used for arithmetic. The investigator found that the children achieved significantly higher in reading than they did in arithmetic. The t ratio was 5.4 for the second graders and 7.5 for the third graders.

The second part of Skapski's study compared reading achievement in the nongraded school with reading achievement in the two graded schools. The average intelligence quotients of the children in the three schools were 116, 116, and 115, respectively. Socioeconomic backgrounds were similar. Teacher training and experience and the amount of time scheduled for reading were comparable. The results of the study showed that the nongraded achieved higher at the .01 level of confidence. The t ratio was 2.8. There was no significant difference between the reading achievements of the two graded schools.

The purpose of the third part of Skapski's study was to determine whether children of all ability levels were receiving benefit from the nongraded plan. The third grade children in all three schools were divided into three ability

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[1]Kelley, loc. cit.

groups; average, superior, and very superior. Children with less than eighty-seven intelligence quotients were not included in this study. The ungraded children achieved from 4.1 to 5.8 grade level in reading. The graded children achieved from 3.3 to 4.9 in reading level. The following tabular presentation shows that each ability level did benefit in both the programs; however, the nongraded pupils reached a higher level of achievement.

| Ability Level | IQ | School I Nongraded | School II Graded | School III Graded |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Average | 88-112 | 4.1 | 3.7 | 3.3 |
| Superior | 113-124 | 4.8 | 4.4 | 4.1 |
| Very Superior | 125 and up | 5.8 | 4.6 | 4.9[1] |

Skapski concluded that the nongraded school benefits all children significantly at the .01 level of confidence.[2]

Zerby also found the performance of the nongraded pupils significantly superior to that of the graded pupils.[3]

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[1]Mary King Skapski, "Ungraded Primary Reading Program: An Objective Evaluation," The Elementary School Journal, LXI (October, 1960), 45.

[2]Ibid., pp. 41-45.

[3]Di Lorenzo and Salter, citing John R. Zerby, "Comparison of Academic Achievement and Social Adjustment of Primary School Children in the Graded and Nongraded School Program," Penn State Review of Educational Research, XIII (May, 1961), 33.

Hopkins conducted a study which appeared to be carefully controlled. His study was made to determine whether differences existed in reading vocabulary and comprehension between pupils in graded and pupils in ungraded primary programs. The two groups were also compared as to teacher evaluations, sociometric patterns, and attendance. The sample consisted of forty-five classrooms in Los Angeles County--twenty-five graded and twenty nongraded. Only the pupils who had spent their entire school careers were included in the study. The pupils entering the third or fourth year of schooling were administered The California Test of Mental Maturity, 1957 S-Form,[1] and The California Reading Test, Upper Primary Level, Form W.[2] Vocabulary, comprehension, and total scores were recorded. The third year pupils were given the reading test again during the last month of the school year. The data showed that by the end of three years of schooling the mean reading ability of the two groups did not differ significantly. The results are shown in the following tabular presentation:

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[1]Elizabeth T. Sullivan, et al., The California Test of Mental Maturity (Monterey, California: The California Test Bureau, 1957).

[2]Ernest W. Tiegs, and Willis W. Clark, The California Reading Test (Monterey, California: The California Test Bureau, 1957).

| Time | Plan | N | IQ | Vocab. | Comprehension | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Beginning Third Year | Ungraded | 62 | 106.1 | 3.22 | 3.35 | 3.31 |
| | Graded | 88 | 107.0 | 3.63 | 3.65 | 3.66 |
| End of Third Year | Ungraded | 62 | | 4.20 | 4.38 | 4.31 |
| | Graded | 88 | | 4.33 | 4.52 | 4.45[1] |

The groups tested at the beginning of their fourth school year showed the same results--no significant difference in reading achievement. An analysis of covariance design adjusted for the difference in intelligence. The tabular presentation for these groups follows:

| Class | IQ | Vocabulary | Comprehension | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Ungraded | 107.6 | 4.70 | 4.72 | 4.73 |
| Adjusted Value | | 4.56 | 4.55 | 4.57 |
| Graded | 100.7 | 4.31 | 4.14 | 4.26 |
| Adjusted Value | | 4.42 | 4.26 | 4.38[2] |

Teacher satisfaction was tested on sixty-three comparisons. Thirty-three items indicated that the ungraded teachers were more satisfied, twenty-three items indicated that the graded teachers were more satisfied, and seven items showed no difference. On the test of teacher satisfaction,

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[1]Kenneth D. Hopkins, et al., "An Empirical Comparison of Pupil Achievement and Other Variables in Graded and Non-graded Classes," American Educational Research Journal, II (November, 1965), 209.

[2]Ibid.

there was no significant difference between nongraded and graded teachers. The sociometric test showed no significant difference in the amount of leadership in the two groups. The check on school attendance of the two groups showed no significant difference in attendance.

Hopkins concluded that the nongraded plan was neither superior nor inferior in regard to pupil achievement, teacher satisfaction, sociometric patterns, or pupil attendance. At the end of Hopkins' four-year study the participating school district returned to the conventional graded organization because the nongraded pupils did not achieve significantly more than the graded pupils, yet caused more administrative problems.[1]

Carbone tested three hypotheses: (1) there is no significant difference in achievement of comparable groups of pupils who have attended graded or nongraded primaries, (2) there is no significant difference in the mental health of these two groups, and (3) there is no identifiable difference in the instructional practices of teachers in the graded and nongraded schools. His sample included 122 nongraded and 122 graded pupils. They were matched as to age, sex, and socioeconomic background. There was a difference in the mean intelligence quotients of the two groups so an analysis of

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[1] Ibid., pp. 207-15.

covariance was used to adjust the mean achievement scores. Intelligence was held constant. The following instruments of measurement were used: Iowa Test of Basic Skills,[1] Mental Health Analysis of the California Test Bureau,[2] an attitude test using polar word pairs, and teacher questionnaires to determine instructional practices. There was found to be a significant difference in achievement favoring the graded pupils in all areas of skills at the .01 level of confidence. The mental health of the two groups was compared on five factors selected for analysis. Four of the five factors showed no significant difference between the two groups; however, the graded group scored higher on the factor of social participation at the .01 level.

Attitudes toward the teachers were measured by using twenty-five polar word pairs to describe the teachers. In all instances the nongraded children described their teachers more favorably than did the graded.

The teacher questionnaire showed no significant difference in instructional methods.

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[1]E. F. Lindquist, et al., Iowa Test of Basic Skills (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1955).

[2]Louis P. Thorpe and Willis W. Clark, Mental Health Analysis of the California Test Bureau (Monterey, California: The California Test Bureau, 1959).

All comparisons in Carbone's study favored the graded pupils with the exception of the pupils' attitudes toward teachers, which favored the nongraded.

Carbone arrived at the following implications as the result of his study: (1) it is not realistic to expect improved academic achievement and personal adjustment in pupils merely on the basis of a change in organizational structure, (2) high achievement and good mental health are not unique to nongrading, and (3) a change in the organizational plan is not enough--it must be accompanied by appropriate adaptations in the instructional practices by teachers.

Carbone recommended that schools should have clear objectives, many materials to cover a wide range of abilities, more individualized teaching, more flexible grouping, better evaluation devices, and a sufficient committment to doing something about individual differences that have so long been recognized.[1]

Arithmetic achievement from 1959 to 1965 was studied by five investigators. Halliwell compared arithmetic achievement of second and third year children in nongraded classes with that of second and third graders, using The Metropolitan Achievement Test.[2] There were fifty pupils in each group of

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[1]Robert F. Carbone, "A Comparison of Graded and Nongraded Elementary Schools," The Elementary School Journal, LXII (November, 1961), 82-88.

[2]Bixler, et al., loc. cit.

second year children. The total mean arithmetic achievement of the graded group was 2.42 and the total mean achievement of the nongraded group was 2.82. This difference was significant at the .05 level. The third year groups were compared in arithmetic computation and problem solving. There were forty-seven graded pupils and fifty nongraded pupils. The graded children scored a mean of 3.64 in computation and the nongraded scored 4.27. The nongraded scored significantly higher at the .01 level. In problem solving the graded pupils' mean score was 3.76 and the nongraded mean was 4.39. The nongraded scored significantly higher at the .05 level of confidence.

Halliwell's study involved a school that had employed the nongraded plan for only eight months. He reported a change in methods, materials and attitudes in the two groups as the experiment progressed. He suggested that studies of the nongraded approach be more adequately controlled. He felt that the nongraded plan was certainly worthy of further investigation.[1]

Hart compared graded and nongraded arithmetic achievement of primary children in Hillsboro, Oregon. His sample consisted of fifty pupils in the control group and fifty pupils in the experimental group. He attempted to make the

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[1]Halliwell, op. cit., pp. 63-64.

groups comparable in every way. Instructional methods and materials were similar. Class sizes and arithmetic teaching periods were equated. The control group had spent three years in graded classes and the experimental group had spent three years in ungraded classes. All the pupils were administered The California Achievement Test, Arithmetic Battery, 1957 edition.[1] The median intelligence quotient of both groups was 106 as measured by The California Test of Mental Maturity, 1957, S-Form.[2] The results of the testing placed the mean achievement of the control group at the 4.5 grade level; whereas, the mean of the nongraded group was 5.0. The difference between the means of the two groups significantly favored the nongraded group at the .02 level of confidence. Of the control group twenty-two per cent achieved one year or more above grade level. Of the experimental group fifty-four per cent achieved scores in this range. Of the control group twenty-six per cent fell below grade level, whereas only fourteen per cent scored below grade level in the experimental group. Hart's study supported the nongraded plan. It appears that the variables were well controlled. Since the study was done after three years of nongrading, it would appear that the Hawthorne effect was not present.[3]

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[1]Ernest W. Tiegs and Willis W. Clark, The California Achievement Test (Monterey, California: The California Test Bureau, 1957).

[2]Sullivan, et al., op. cit.

[3]Robert H. Hart, "The Nongraded Primary School and Arithmetic," The Arithmetic Teacher, IX (March, 1962), 130-33.

Provus conducted his study comparing homogeneous and heterogeneous grouping for arithmetic instruction in Homewood, Illinois. This middle to upper class suburb of Chicago had a population of thirteen thousand. The average achievement of the school children was a year and one-half above the national average as measured by standardized tests. The average intelligence quotient was at the seventieth percentile. The experiment involved nineteen intermediate classrooms. There were eleven classes grouped homogeneously by arithmetic achievement. The remaining eight classes were grouped heterogeneously. The arithmetic curriculum was clearly defined and the school allowed movement from one grade level to another within the school year. The teachers were assigned randomly and all shared in-service meetings and communications. The teachers in both groups were encouraged to move the children through the arithmetic curriculum as quickly as their ability permitted. The Iowa Test of Basic Skills[1] was used as a pre-test and later as a post-test. The average growth scores of the control group was 12.53; whereas, that of the experimental group was 16.74. The difference was significant at the .001 level of confidence with one degree of freedom.

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[1]Lindquist, et al., loc. cit.

A second part of this study showed the effect of homogeneous grouping on children of various levels of ability. The data showed that the experimental high and middle groups had higher growth scores than the corresponding control groups at each grade level, but the low control group had a somewhat higher growth score than the low experimental group. To determine whether the observed differences in growth scores were due to coincidental differences between the intelligence of the groups, a series of t tests was run to test the difference between the average achievement growth of the experimental and control groups. When subjects were matched as to intelligence, the results showed that only the upper-ability experimental group achieved at a significantly higher level than the corresponding control group. The significance was at the .01 level of confidence with thirty-six degrees of freedom.

To measure the Hawthorne effect on the study, the Metropolitan Achievement Test[1] scores of the previous year were compared to the achievement scores of the control classes. The control classes of 1958 did no better than the classes of 1957. The investigator inferred that the Hawthorne effect did not account for the growth observed in the experimental classes.

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[1]Bixler, et al., loc. cit.

An interest test was given, and it was found that there were no significant differences between the responses of the experimental and control groups. The investigator felt that this also showed the lack of the Hawthorne effect.

Questionnaires were administered to teachers for information on their attitudes and performances. In no case were the responses of the teachers of one group significantly different from the responses of the other group. All teachers indicated that they would like to teach classes grouped as to ability the following year.

Both groups of teachers were interested in and favorable toward the program, though the experimental group showed somewhat more positive reaction toward the program than did the control group.

Grouping by ability proved more proficient. The competent pupils profited most. The average pupils profited slightly, and the slow may have profited no more than they would have in a heterogeneous class. On the basis of these findings, ability grouping for arithmetic instruction was extended to the third through eighth grades in Homewood for the following year.

Provus suggested that there be new ways devised to work with the slow learner, continuous revision of the curriculum to accommodate for gradual progress of all pupils,

and in-service training for the teachers.[1]

Zerby's study compared the two kinds of organization on arithmetic achievement. He found statistically significant advantages in favor of nongrading.[2]

Carbone was the only investigator during this period whose data on arithmetic achievement favored the graded classes. His experimental and control groups were matched as to age, sex, and socioeconomic structure. Because there was a significant difference in the mean intelligence quotient of the two groups, an analysis of covariance was used to adjust the mean achievement scores. Thus, intelligence was held constant. He compared the arithmetic achievement of the 122 graded and 122 nongraded pupils and found that the graded scored significantly higher than the nongraded at the .01 level.[3]

All three studies of spelling achievement made from 1959 to 1965 favored the nongraded approach to teaching. Halliwell compared second and third year students of graded

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[1]Malcolm M. Provus, "Ability Grouping in Arithmetic," The Elementary School Journal, LX (April, 1960), 391-98.

[2]Di Lorenzo and Salter, citing John R. Zerby, "Comparison of Academic Achievement and Social Adjustment of Primary School Children in the Graded and Nongraded School Program," Penn State Review of Educational Research, XIII (May, 1961), 33.

[3]Carbone, op. cit., 85.

and nongraded classes using The Metropolitan Achievement Test.[1] The data showed a gain in spelling achievement of the second year students, but it was not significant. The third year students gained significantly at the .01 level.[2]

Ingram's evaluation of the primary cycle at Flint, Michigan, compared the sixty-eight nongraded pupils who had attended school for three years with the 337 third graders in the normal graded structure. The mean achievement in spelling was at the 4.6 grade level for the nongraded and at the 4.0 level for the graded classes. Later she compared the spelling achievement of the experimental group with that of all third-graders in Flint--3,314 pupils. The mean spelling achievement was 4.6, as stated above, for the experimental group and 3.8 for the 3,314 in the control group. Differences in the mean scores favored the pupils in the primary cycle.[3]

Zerby also reported more favorable results in spelling achievement with nongraded groups.[4]

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[1]Bixler, et al., loc. cit.

[2]Halliwell, loc. cit.

[3]Ingram, op. cit., pp. 79-80.

[4]Di Lorenzo and Salter, citing John R. Zerby, "Comparison of Academic Achievement and Social Adjustment of Primary School Children in the Graded and Nongraded School Program," Penn State Review of Educational Research, XIII (May, 1961), 33.

The research studies conducted between 1959 and 1965 appeared to be more objective than those of earlier years. The investigators learned from former studies that the variables were quite difficult to control and they attempted to improve their research designs; their goal being to conduct more systematic research and to gather information that would be more reliable.

If one could rely upon the evidence presented by the fourteen studies made during this period, the nongraded plan would lead in evidence of achievement; however, there have been no conclusive data. All investigators stated the need for better research designs. They indicated the need for more control of the variables--not an easy goal, but a necessary one for reliable evidence.

More recent comparisons of the two organizational plans have been made by four investigators.

Williams, of Hammond, Indiana, reported that most of the literature on the nongraded school was based on opinion rather than research. She expressed the need to get tangible evidence by controlled studies measuring achievement. The purpose of her study was to determine whether there was a relationship between achievement and organizational structure. She stated a null hypothesis of no significant difference in achievement between comparable groups of children who had attended graded and nongraded primary schools. Her sample

consisted of thirty-eight in the control group and the same number in the experimental group. These pupils were matched as to age, sex, and intelligence quotient. They were all tested at the end of the third year in school. The instrument used was The Stanford Achievement Test, Primary Battery, Form X.[1] Achievement was tested in word meaning, paragraph meaning, spelling, word study skills, arithmetic, computation, arithmetic concepts, and the total score. Grade equivalents were used to determine the differences between the two groups. The data showed no significant difference in achievement between the groups except in paragraph meaning, which favored the graded school at the .05 level of confidence.

To determine whether it was the high scorers or the low scorers who caused the significant difference, the ten highest achieving matched pairs and ten lowest achieving matched pairs were selected for further study. It was found that the low-scorers caused the significant difference. The low-scoring pupils in the graded plan made significantly higher achievement in paragraph meaning than did the low-scorers in the nongraded plan. The significance was at the .05 level.

Total achievement was studied and a significant difference at the .05 level was found between the high-scorers of the graded and nongraded classes favoring the nongraded

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[1]Kelley, loc. cit.

group. The differences in total achievement between the low-scorers of the two groups significantly favored the graded group at the .05 level. These findings suggested that the nongraded organizational plan favored the brighter pupils and the graded plan favored lower-ability pupils. Williams concluded that when the entire study was considered, there did not appear to be a significant relation between school organization and pupil achievement. She accepted her null hypothesis of no significant difference between the two groups.

Williams stated that there was a difference in the teacher-pupil ratio between the two groups. In the graded group there was an average of twenty-seven students per teacher and the nongraded averaged forty-five pupils per teacher.[1] This lack of control of teacher-pupil ratio could result in unreliable research evidence. It would seem that teacher-pupil ratio was an important factor in the study and could have been controlled.

Jones assessed the effects of primary nongraded organization on reading performance. There were twenty-six pupils in the nongraded group and the same number in the graded group. Data were gathered at the end of one and one-half

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[1]Wilmajean Williams, "Academic Achievement in a Graded and in a Nongraded School," The Elementary School Journal, LXVII (December, 1966), 135-39.

school years and again at the end of three years. The teachers received identical treatment, workshops, consultants, and materials. The reading performance of the experimental group was significantly higher at the end of eighteen months. At the end of three years, the nongraded group scored higher but not at a significant level. Jones felt that the differences in results of the study might have been due to the transient effects of experimental conditions or due to the greater suitability of the nongraded organization to beginning students. He further stated that perhaps the real advantage of the nongraded plan was that the teachers and pupils were better satisfied.[1]

It occurred to this investigator that the change in findings in Jones' study could have perhaps been due to a change in procedures with the original groups. Could the ungraded group have slipped back into a more graded structure? Could the graded group have unintentionally had a nongraded approach?

Anastasiow felt that gains made by children in the initial stages of an experimental study were due to more accurate placement of the pupils at the beginning of the

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[1]Charles J. Jones, et al., "Comparison of Pupil Achievement After One and One-Half and Three Years in a Nongraded Program," Journal of Educational Research, LXI (October, 1967), 75-77.

program. He further stated that children should be placed in a group near their level of current achievement, and their progress should be evaluated often for regrouping purposes. He predicted that statistically different results could be obtained in an ungraded cross-grade plan and in a school organized in traditional self-contained classrooms, when accurate placement of children for instructional purposes was made.

Anastasiow's study compared achievement in reading between two schools. School A consisted of ungraded intermediate classes. School B was a traditional self-contained plan, involving children in grades four through six. These two groups were matched as to social class. The Science Research Associates Test[1] and Sequential Test of Educational Progress[2] were used to assess the level of achievement in both groups. These scores were used to place children in appropriate cross-grade groups in School A and to help teachers group for instruction in School B. Both schools had many materials. Teachers of both schools were allowed

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[1]L. L. Thurstone and Thelma G. Thurstone, Science Research Associates Test (Chicago: Science Research Associates, Inc., 1962).

[2]Sequential Test of Educational Progress, Cooperative Test Division (Princeton, New Jersey: Educational Testing Service, 1957).

to use whatever instructional methods they desired. One class in each school used an individualized approach. Attempts to control the teacher variable were made by matching experience of teachers. Principal ratings were used to match teacher competence. The class size variable was controlled. A year was spent getting the nongraded plan in operation before the study began. After one school year of instruction, the Sequential Test of Educational Progress reading test was used to measure achievement of both groups. It was found that both schools made gains roughly equivalent to two years' achievement.

Anastasiow reported that gains greater than would be expected by chance alone could be made in either a self-contained or a cross-graded grouping plan, when the children were grouped near their level of achievement and provided with proper instruction. In other words, instructional procedures rather than type of organizational plan accounted for the significant reading achievement of the children in both schools.[1]

A recent study by Brody compared the achievement of first and second year pupils in graded and nongraded classrooms. The subjects were 362 children from nongraded public elementary schools and 241 first and second graders in the

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[1]Nicholas J. Anastasiow, "A Comparison of Two Approaches in Ungrading Reading Instruction," Elementary English, XLV (April, 1968), 495-97.

same school district in Pennsylvania. All pupils involved had been administered The California Test of Mental Maturity, Short Form,[1] and The Stanford Achievement Test, Primary Battery,[2] during the first week of May. There was a difference in the mean intelligence quotients of the two groups. To control this variable, sub-samples of children matched as to intelligence quotient were obtained from the nongraded and the control schools. The final selection consisted of thirty-four children in the experimental group and the same number in the control group. These children were also matched as to sex and age.

After one school year of instruction, the pupils were tested on achievement in five areas; paragraph meaning, word meaning, spelling, arithmetic reasoning, and arithmetic computation. The nongraded experimental group scored higher on all tests. The first year pupils scored significantly higher at the .05 level on spelling, arithmetic reasoning, and arithmetic computation. The second year pupils scored significantly higher at the .05 level on word meaning, arithmetic reasoning, and arithmetic computation.

The second part of Brody's study was designed to determine whether nongrading affected the achievement of

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[1] Sullivan and Clark, loc. cit.

[2] Kelley, loc. cit.

high-ability pupils differently from that of the low-ability pupils. The first year children were divided by intelligence quotients into four groups. There were two nongraded groups and two graded groups. The intelligence of the high-ability group was 125 and up. The intelligence quotient of the low ability group ranged downward from 113.5. He found that the low-ability group of the first year students benefited more from nongrading than did the high-ability group. In the study with the second year students, Brody found that the high-ability group profited more from nongrading. Brody's data showed that children after one year in a nongraded plan profited more than did children from the graded structure. These differences were significant at the .05 level in six of the ten tests given. He further concluded that low-ability groups of first year pupils received more benefit from nongrading than did high-ability groups; whereas high-ability groups of second year pupils received more benefit from nongrading than did low-ability groups of second year pupils.

Brody did not report control of the teacher variable or of the curricular materials. He stated that the superior achievement in arithmetic of the nongraded group could have been partially due to the fact that they were taught traditional arithmetic, whereas the graded group was taught modern mathematics. The arithmetic sections of the

achievement test given were based upon the traditional approach to arithmetic.[1] It appears that there could have been more control of the teacher variable and of the instructional materials.

McLoughlin reported that in his survey of eighty-eight studies, comparing published and unpublished academic achievement of graded and nongraded plans, forty-eight per cent had been done on reading achievement, twenty-six per cent on arithmetic, eleven per cent on language arts, nine per cent on total achievement, three per cent on work study skills, and the remaining three per cent on science and social studies.

Half of the reading studies were unable to find substantial differences in reading achievement between the graded and nongraded schools. In the remaining studies, the children from nongraded classes appeared to have a slight advantage. However, there was quite a number of additional unsystematic research studies that reported differences favorable to children from nongraded schools.

In arithmetic achievement, he found five studies favored the graded classes, three studies favored the nongraded classes, and three studies reported no difference in

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[1]Erness B. Brody, "Achievement of First- and Second-Year Pupils in Graded and Nongraded Classrooms," The Elementary School Journal, LXX (April, 1970), 391-94.

achievement between the two plans. The assessed unsystematic studies in arithmetic showed one study favored the nongraded plan and one study reported no significant difference in arithmetic attainments between the two plans.

In language arts, two studies favored the nongraded plan, one favored the graded plan, and seven found no significant difference between the two.

In the other areas of academic skill development, there has not been enough research conducted with which to draw conclusions. McLoughlin reported that there have been too few studies of the nongraded plan. He further stated that the studies that have been conducted have not included enough students. Of twenty-seven studies conducted, only two have involved more than 1,000 children. There were two studies of thirty-five students or less. There were eight studies involving thirty-six to 100 children, eight studied 101 to 200 students, three studied 201 to 300 pupils, one studied 401 to 500 pupils, and three studied 501 to 1,000 students.[1]

Whenever research is done in the classroom, it is next to impossible to control all relevant variables. Though the data gathered so far are inadequate and inconclusive,

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[1]William P. McLoughlin, The Nongraded School: A Critical Assessment (Albany, New York: The State Education Department, 1967), pp. 14-43.

findings are encouraging and warrant further experimentation with nongrading.

Jeffries conducted a survey of nongraded primaries in Iowa in the 1964-65 school year. She found that there were twenty-one school districts in Iowa that contained some form of the nongraded primary school organization.[1]

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[1]Donnabelle Jeffries, "Educational Practices of the Nongraded Primaries in Iowa to Determine the Extent to Which the Graded Structure Has Been Removed." (unpublished Master's field report, Drake University, Des Moines, Iowa, 1966), 35-36.

# CHAPTER III

## PRESENTATION AND INTERPRETATION OF THE DATA

A list of nongraded school districts in Iowa was secured from the Iowa State Department of Public Instruction. The investigator sent questionnaires to the sixty districts that indicated they had some type of nongraded primary classes. An administrator's questionnaire and two teachers' questionnaires were sent to each of these sixty districts. A total of 180 questionnaires was mailed out. There were 125 questionnaires returned.

Forty-two of the sixty administrators returned their questionnaires. Seventeen of these administrators reported that they did not have nongraded classes except for the education of the atypical child, such as classes for the retarded. Twenty-five administrators reported operating one or more nongraded schools.

Questionnaires were sent to 120 teachers. Eighty-three teachers replied; however, thirty reported that they were not teaching in a nongraded school. Fifty-three reported they were teaching in a nongraded school.

Included in this chapter are a report of the data obtained from the twenty-five administrators and the fifty-three teachers who had indicated that they were involved in a nongraded school and a report of an interpretation of

these data. The first presentation and interpretation of the data concerns the administrators' questionnaires.

## I. ADMINISTRATORS' QUESTIONNAIRES

Presentation of data. Twenty-five administrators reported the following information about their nongraded schools:

Most of the nongraded primaries had enrollments of over 200 as is shown in the following:

| Enrollment of Nongraded Primary | Number Reporting |
|---|---|
| Less than 50 | 1 |
| 50 to 100 | 3 |
| 101 to 200 | 6 |
| 201 to 300 | 7 |
| Over 300 | 8 |

Most of the administrators used the title, "Continuous Progress," for their organizational plan. The titles used for the nongraded plans were reported as follows:

| Title | Number Reporting |
|---|---|
| Nongraded | 5 |
| Continuous Progress | 14 |
| Ungraded | 2 |
| Primary Unit Plan | 3 |
| Modified Nongraded | 1 |

Most of the nongraded plans had been in operation over four years.

| Time in Operation | Number Reporting |
|---|---|
| Less than a year | 1 |
| 1 to 2 years | 4 |
| 2 to 3 years | 3 |
| 3 to 4 years | 2 |
| 4 to 5 years | 5 |
| Over 5 years | 9 |

Fifteen of the twenty-five administrators reported that their nongraded plans replaced the previous first through third grade organization. The kindergarten was included in six of the districts, and four districts included kindergarten through sixth grade.

Respondents reported that, in the main, grade levels were not entirely removed. As to removal, the replies were the following:

| Removal of Grade Labels | Number Reporting |
|---|---|
| Grade levels entirely removed | 10 |
| Grade levels not removed | 3 |
| Still striving for this | 12 |

In regard to academic subjects that were nongraded, all administrators who responded reported the nongrading of reading. The following was reported:

| Academic School Subjects Nongraded | Number Reporting |
|---|---|
| Reading | 25 |
| Spelling | 19 |
| Arithmetic | 19 |
| Writing | 17 |
| Language | 17 |
| Social Studies | 12 |
| Music | 8 |
| Art | 7 |
| Physical Education | 8 |
| Science | 9 |

Administrators reported the number of achievement levels in the nongraded primaries as follows:

| Number of Achievement Levels | Number Reporting |
|---|---|
| Less than 5 | 2 |
| 6 to 10 | 8 |
| 11 to 15 | 8 |
| 16 to 20 | 0 |
| 21 to 25 | 1 |
| Over 25 | 2 |

As to provisions made for remedial instruction, fifteen administrators reported that they did make provisions for remedial instruction, and nine reported no provisions for remedial work.

Regarding the provisions made for special education classes, twelve administrators indicated provisions were made and thirteen reported that no provisions were made.

In regard to the length of time a pupil must spend in the nongraded primary, seventeen administrators stated there was no required amount of time spent, and seven stated that they required a pupil to remain in the nongraded primary at least three years. The average length of time spent in the primary was reported as three school years by seventeen administrators and four years by eight administrators. The administrators who reported an average of four years included the kindergarten in their nongraded plan.

Most of the administrators reported that the desire for the nongraded plan had emerged from administrators and teachers. Their reports were as follows:

| Desire for Nongrading Emerged From | Number Reporting |
|---|---|
| Administrators | 23 |
| Teachers | 18 |
| Parents | 4 |

One year was the most frequently reported time period for faculty orientation. The various amounts of time spent on the orientation of faculty to the nongraded plan were as follows:

| Amount of Time Spent on Faculty Orientation | Number Reporting |
|---|---|
| 8 to 10 hours | 1 |
| One month | 2 |
| Two months | 1 |
| Three months | 1 |
| One meeting per month | 1 |
| Six months | 1 |
| One year | 6 |
| Eighteen months | 1 |
| Each year, first grade | 1 |
| Two years | 1 |
| Three years | 1 |

In-service training was reported as taking place in twenty-three of the twenty-five districts.

The majority of the administrators reported that the public was oriented to their nongraded programs through special meetings and parent-teacher meetings. The orientation plans were conducted through the following media:

| Media Used for Orientation Of the Public | Number Reporting |
|---|---|
| Special meetings | 18 |
| PTA meetings | 17 |
| News articles | 12 |
| Consultants' services | 4 |
| Radio | 3 |
| No facility used | 1 |

Twenty of the twenty-five administrators reported the holding of periodic meetings for reorientation purposes.

In regard to where the nongraded plan was first implemented in their school, the administrators reported as follows:

| Where Nongraded First Implemented | Number Reporting |
|---|---|
| In one or more pilot schools | 9 |
| In all first grades | 4 |
| At all primary levels | 11 |

In initiating the nongraded primary, respondents reported spending the following amount of time:

| Time Spent Initiating Nongraded Plan | Number Reporting |
|---|---|
| Less than 6 months | 4 |
| 6 months to a year | 9 |
| Over a year, less than 2 | 8 |
| Over 2 years | 3 |

Twenty-four of the administrators reported the utilization of a curriculum designed for different levels rather than for different grades. Twenty-three administrators reported the feeling that their schools provided for continuous vertical progress of each pupil. All respondents reported that administrators and teachers were involved in curriculum development. Groups involved in curriculum development were reported as follows:

| Group Involved in Curriculum Development | Number Reporting |
|---|---|
| Administrators | 25 |
| Teachers | 25 |
| Specialists | 17 |
| Parents | 2 |
| Children | 3 |
| Consultants | 14 |

Administrators in twenty-one districts reported that the curriculum was planned after school hours. In fifteen school districts the curriculum was planned during the summer and in ten districts the teachers were allowed released time to plan the curriculum.

Twenty administrators reported constant revision being done on the curriculum. One reported there had been no revision.

The plans of grouping for instruction used in the different school districts were as follows:

| Grouping Plan Used | Number Reporting |
|---|---|
| Self-contained classroom | 11 |
| Semi-self-contained | 12 |
| Departmentalized | 2 |
| Team Teaching | 12 |
| Differential staffing | 1 |

Of the administrators using a self-contained class plan, thirteen kept the teachers with the same groups of children for one year. Three reported keeping the teachers with the same groups for two years.

When assigning pupils to teachers, nineteen administrators reported that personalities were considered. One reported that personalities were not considered.

Administrators of six districts reported the use of elementary guidance counselors. The remaining nineteen reported no counselors were employed. In the districts using guidance counselors, the counselor-pupil ratios were as follows:

| School | Counselor-Pupil Ratio |
|---|---|
| A | 1 -- 139 |
| B | 1 -- 700 |
| C | 1 -- 700 |
| D | 1 -- 800 |
| E | 1 --1200 |
| F | Not given |

The range of the number of children needing more than three years to complete the nongraded primary, excluding kindergarten, was from one per cent reported by three administrators to twenty per cent reported by one. Four administrators reported five per cent of their students requiring more than three years. The number of administrators reporting

various percentages of pupils requiring more than three years is as follows:

| Per Cent | Number | Per Cent | Number |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 3 | 7 | 2 |
| 2 | 0 | 8 | 3 |
| 3 | 1 | 9 | 0 |
| 4 | 2 | 10 | 2 |
| 5 | 4 | 12 | 1 |
| 6 | 1 | 20 | 1 |

The administrators indicated that the pupils seldom, if ever, were allowed to complete the nongraded primary in less than three years. The percentage of children who required less than three years to complete the primary was reported as follows:

| Per Cent Needing Less Than Three Years | Number Administrators Reporting |
|---|---|
| 0 | 10 |
| 1 | 6 |
| 2 | 1 |
| 4 | 2 |
| 5 to 10 | 1 |

Of the twenty-three administrators who responded to the question regarding problems with children who completed the nongraded program slowly, nineteen indicated they had no problems. The remaining four stated that their problems were with parents who did not completely understand the nongraded program.

In reply to the question of problems with acceleration, twenty reported no problems with acceleration. Three reported problems due to social immaturity of the pupils who were accelerated.

Seventeen administrators reported they had children who were not ready to advance after four years in the nongraded primary (excluding kindergarten). Eight indicated that they had no problem with this.

Practically all administrators reported a change in method of recording pupil progress with the adoption of the nongraded plan. Only three administrators stated that they did not change their reporting procedures.

Twenty administrators reported that more time was spent on collecting and recording information about each pupil in the nongraded plan. Four administrators reported that no additional time was needed.

All, except one administrator, reported using standardized achievement tests in their school or schools.

The majority of the administrators reported that teachers were not given released time for record keeping. Ten administrators reported allowing released time for record keeping.

Regarding the methods of reporting student progress, a large majority of the districts utilized parent-teacher conferences. The methods reported were as follows:

| Reporting System | Number Reporting |
|---|---|
| Letter grades | 13 |
| Checklists | 13 |
| Parent-teacher conferences | 22 |
| Home visits | 3 |
| Bar graphs | 1 |

Administrators in ten districts reported that research on the nongraded plan was being conducted in their schools. Of these districts, two administrators indicated that the results of the research were available. The remaining fifteen administrators reported that no research was being conducted.

Administrators in twenty-two of the districts stated that the nongraded plan placed greater demands upon the administration. Three administrators indicated that there were no greater demands placed upon them.

When asked whether they would recommend the nongraded plan, twenty-two administrators replied that they would recommend it, one replied that he would not recommend it, and two did not answer.

All twenty-four of the administrators who replied to the item in regard to the teachers' attitudes toward nongrading felt that the teachers in their districts were in favor of the nongraded plan.

All, but one administrator, indicated that they felt the parents were in support of the nongraded plan.

The administrators were submitted a list of ten statements of the case for the nongraded plan and a list of ten statements against the plan. They were asked to check two statements they felt were most applicable for nongraded and two that they felt were most applicable against the nongraded school. The favorable statement most often chosen was, "Recognition and provision for individual differences among children." The unfavorable statement most often checked was, "Widespread misuse and abuse of the terminology of nongradedness." The lists and the replies of the administrators follows:

PROS AND CONS OF NONGRADEDNESS

FOR NONGRADED SCHOOLS

| | |
|---|---|
| 19 | Recognition and provision for individual differences among children. |
| 0 | Flexibility in administrative structure. |
| 5 | Abolition of artificial barriers of grades and promotion. |
| 8 | Respect for the continuity and interrelatedness of learning. |
| 9 | Student progress commensurate with ability. |
| 3 | Improved mental health for both teachers and students. |
| 1 | Stimulation for major curricular revision. |
| 1 | Harmony with the educational objectives of a democratic society. |
| 0 | Administrative feasibility for all levels and age groups. |
| 2 | Schools program-oriented rather than operationally controlled. |

AGAINST NONGRADED SCHOOLS

3 Soft pedagogy, lacking fixed standards and requirements.

2 Impossible burden on teachers.

1 Replacement of grade requirements by reading levels.

2 Lack of pupil progress information to parents.

9 Inadequacy and insufficiency of teacher preparation.

1 Absence of minimal standards and expectancies for all children.

1 Lack of specificity and order in curriculum sequence.

1 "An improved means to an unimproved end" - - Thoreau

7 Uncertainty that improved teaching will result.

18 Widespread misuse and abuse of the terminology of nongradedness.[1]

On the administrators' questionnaires there were three items concerning which the investigator requested comments. In one, the administrators were asked for comments about the most difficult problem to overcome when implementing the nongraded plan. Nine administrators stated that the orientation of teachers was their most difficult problem. Seven stated that orienting parents was their most difficult problem. Three administrators stated that securing adequate materials for nongrading was their most difficult problem.

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[1]Stuart E. Dean, "Nongraded Schools," U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, Office of Education, Educational Brief, No. 1 (Washington, D. C.: Government Printing Office, July, 1964), pp. 24-25.

Other comments included difficulty with the following: grouping students, helping students adjust to the new program, removing the grade labels, securing proper physical facilities, planning time schedules, reporting student progress, designing the curriculum, staffing, and preventing teachers from comparing students with one another.

The administrators were also asked what contributed most to the successful implementation of their nongraded program. Eleven administrators replied that a cooperative and interested staff contributed most to their success. Seven stated that cooperative parents contributed to their success. Four credited adequate preparation as the key factor to their success. Other comments on what contributed most to their successful implementation of a nongraded program were as follows: the Title I program, summer programs, cooperation of school board and administrators, parent-teacher conferences, communication, student interest and achievement, teachers' recognition and provisions for individual differences, visits to nongraded schools, and hard work and determination. Two administrators reported they did not have a successful implementation of the nongraded program.

The administrators were asked what advice they would give school systems contemplating the nongraded plan. The advice given by twelve respondents was to take plenty of

time to orient teachers and parents to the nongraded organizational plan. Seven respondents suggested adequate in-service training of teachers. The suggestion of visits to nongraded schools was given by six administrators. Four administrators stressed the importance of acceptance of the plan by the total staff. Other advice given by the administrators to schools contemplating a nongraded plan was as follows: enlist the aid of consultants, obtain sufficient materials, nongrade one grade at a time, involve all teachers, orient children to the plan, be ready for hard work, ungrade the whole elementary school rather than just the primary, be organized when the children come, do away with formal report cards, do not be concerned with classic definitions and procedures but do be concerned with continuous progress and individualization, and define the school's philosophy and build a program that meets the philosophy.

## II. TEACHERS' QUESTIONNAIRES

Presentation of data. More than half of the teachers responding to the questionnaires reported they had taught over ten years in elementary schools. The following tabular presentation indicates the length of time the respondents had taught:

| Years Taught in Elementary Schools | Number Reporting |
|---|---|
| Less than a year | 1 |
| 2 to 3 years | 5 |
| 4 to 6 years | 5 |
| 7 to 10 years | 12 |
| 11 to 15 years | 8 |
| 16 to 20 years | 12 |
| Over 20 years | 10 |

Most of the teachers reported they had taught over three years in a nongraded primary class. In regard to the number of years experienced in teaching a nongraded primary, the respondents replied:

| Number of Years Taught in Nongraded Primary | Number Teachers Reporting |
|---|---|
| Less than one year | 5 |
| 1 to 2 years | 16 |
| 3 years | 8 |
| 4 years | 7 |
| 5 years | 3 |
| Over 5 years | 12 |

More than half of the teachers reported that they had been involved in planning their nongraded school from the start. There were thirty who indicated that they were involved and twenty-one indicated that they were not involved in the planning from the start of the program.

In regard to the number of students taught per day, the largest number of respondents indicated they taught twenty to twenty-five students. Large numbers were sometimes indicated in the cases of team teaching. The number taught daily by various teachers was as follows:

| Children Taught Per Day | Number Teachers Reporting |
|---|---|
| Less than 20 | 6 |
| 20 to 25 | 21 |
| 26 to 30 | 14 |
| 31 to 35 | 7 |
| 36 to 40 | 0 |
| 41 to 50 | 2 |
| 51 to 60 | 0 |
| 61 to 70 | 3 |

Most respondents reported teaching reading, spelling, language, arithmetic, science, and social studies. The data on academic subjects taught follows:

| Academic Subject Taught | Number Reporting |
|---|---|
| Reading | 51 |
| Spelling | 49 |
| Language | 52 |
| Arithmetic | 52 |
| Science | 47 |
| Social Studies | 49 |
| Art | 27 |
| Music | 8 |
| Physical Education | 10 |

Thirty-four teachers indicated that their schools' curricula had been revised for the nongraded plan. There were fifteen who reported no revision and the remaining four were not sure.

Of the respondents, twenty-five felt that the curricula were well planned for each level in their schools. Twenty-two stated that the curricula were fairly well planned and five indicated the need for complete revision of their curricula.

In regard to involvement in curriculum development, forty-six teachers indicated they had been involved, and the remaining seven stated they had not been involved.

Fourteen teachers reported they were allowed released time for curriculum development, whereas thirty-nine reported no released time for curriculum development.

In regard to the use of different types of materials, forty-eight teachers reported using graded instructional materials, thirty-one used programmed instructional materials, and twenty-two utilized educational television.

In regard to the range of graded instructional materials used in their classrooms, the respondents replied as follows:

| Graded Materials Used | Number Reporting |
|---|---|
| Readiness | 23 |
| First grade | 41 |
| Second grade | 40 |
| Third grade | 27 |
| Fourth grade | 10 |
| Fifth grade | 5 |
| Sixth grade | 1 |
| Above sixth grade | 1 |

Twenty-nine teachers indicated they had a sufficient quantity of self-teaching and self-testing materials, whereas twenty-four replied that they did not have enough of these materials.

To reinforce learning, all respondents reported using similar materials rather than same materials. One teacher reported using both the same materials and similar materials.

In regard to the amount of time they received assistance in their classrooms, half of the respondents reported no assistance at all. The amounts of assistance were reported as follows:

| Time Receiving Classroom Assistance | Number Reporting |
|---|---|
| None at all | 26 |
| Less than one hour weekly | 4 |
| 1 to 3 hours weekly | 12 |
| 4 to 6 hours weekly | 2 |
| 7 to 10 hours weekly | 5 |
| 11 to 20 hours weekly | 3 |
| Over 20 hours weekly | 1 |

The following procedures were indicated as being used in the classrooms:

| Procedures Used | Number Reporting |
|---|---|
| Democratic procedures | 45 |
| Individualized instruction | 49 |
| Primarily lecture methods | 4 |
| Primarily activities methods | 37 |

Three teachers viewed their role as a disseminator of information; forty-eight did not view their role as such.

All, but one teacher, viewed her role as that of a learning counselor.

In regard to the enthusiasm felt, thirty-seven teachers indicated they were very enthusiastic over the non-graded plan; thirteen felt somewhat enthusiastic over nongrading; and three felt no enthusiasm for the nongraded plan.

Regarding the administration of tests, fifty teachers stated that they administered standardized tests. Forty-two stated that they administered periodic tests to help in determining the placement of each child.

A majority of the teachers, thirty-seven, indicated that every child did not remain in one level until he had mastered all the listed skills at that level; whereas, fifteen teachers reported the child was kept in one level until he had mastered all the listed skills.

Most teachers, thirty-four, reported the children never skipped levels; whereas nineteen reported that children sometimes skipped levels.

Forty-four teachers reported no repetition of materials already mastered, other than for regular review. The remaining nine respondents reported that their pupils sometimes repeated materials already mastered.

In regard to make-up work for children who had been absent, thirty-five teachers indicated they required make-up work and eighteen teachers reported that they did not require make-up work.

The method of grouping for instruction reported most frequently used in the classrooms by respondents was as follows:

| Grouping Plan Most Frequently Used | Number Reporting |
|---|---|
| Whole class | 6 |
| Small group | 28 |
| Individualized | 9 |

In regard to the age range of the children taught, the respondents indicated the following:

| Age of Children | Number Reported |
|---|---|
| 5 years old | 6 |
| 6 years old | 26 |
| 7 years old | 36 |
| 8 years old | 35 |
| 9 years old | 27 |
| 10 years old | 12 |
| 11 years old | 1 |

Forty-one respondents reported their children never spoke of "failing," or "not passing." The remaining twelve teachers reported that their children did use these terms.

In regard to the aid given by the nongraded plan in the development of a good self-concept on the part of the pupils, forty-nine teachers felt a better self-concept was developed in nongraded schools. Three teachers did not feel this way. Two teachers indicated that some advanced non-graded students became egotistical.

The teachers reported, in forty-nine cases, a feeling that the children of nongraded classes made more continuous progress than did children in graded classes.

All except two of the teachers reported they felt the pupils in their schools were grouped so that they could experience success.

In regard to the pressures of achievement and maintenance of academic standards, thirty-nine respondents felt that these pressures had been eliminated or remarkably reduced in their nongraded schools. The remaining fourteen teachers felt that pressures had not been reduced.

All except two teachers indicated their feeling that the nongraded primary more adequately met the needs of the individual child than did the graded primary.

In regard to the groups of children who benefited most from nongrading, the respondents indicated the following:

| Children Benefiting Most From Nongrading | Number Reported |
|---|---|
| All equally benefit | 21 |
| Children with superior ability | 14 |
| Children with below average ability | 16 |
| Children classified as slow learners | 18 |
| Children with average ability | 1 |

Regarding parent-teacher rapport in nongraded schools, thirty-nine teachers reported that they felt the rapport was better than in graded schools. Twelve teachers did not feel that it was better.

In reporting on evaluation devices used to measure pupil academic growth, thirty-three teachers indicated that they had adequate devices and twenty indicated that they did not have adequate evaluation devices.

Regarding the number of reading levels within their classrooms, most teachers reported having more than four levels. The information was as follows:

| Reading Levels | Number Reported |
|---|---|
| Less than 3 | 5 |
| 3 levels | 17 |
| 4 levels | 10 |
| More than 4 levels | 21 |

Teachers, in thirty-five cases, reported holding frequent teachers' meetings to discuss special concerns of the nongraded plan. Seventeen teachers reported having no such meetings.

Most nongraded schools issued report cards. Forty-four teachers indicated that report cards were sent to parents, and eight indicated that they did not send report cards.

Regarding the reporting system used in their schools, teachers reported the following:

| Reporting System | Number of Teachers Reporting |
|---|---|
| Letter grades | 23 |
| Parent-teacher conferences | 44 |
| Checklists | 24 |
| Descriptive comments | 19 |
| Letters to parents | 4 |
| Bar graphs | 3 |
| Home visits | 1 |

In reply to the question about the use of skill cards, eighteen teachers reported using skill cards and thirty-five teachers reported not using these cards.

As to the establishment of individual goals for each pupil, approximately half of the teachers replied that they had established individual goals for each child, and approximately half replied that they did not establish individual goals for each pupil.

Most of the teachers reported considering many factors when setting up goals for pupils; however, one teacher reported she considered only chronological age when she set up goals. The reports were as follows:

| Factor Considered in Setting up Pupil Goals | Number Reporting |
|---|---|
| Intelligence quotient | 33 |
| Academic achievement | 44 |
| Social maturity | 44 |
| Physical development | 39 |
| Emotional maturity | 47 |
| Chronological age | 31 |

Most teachers, thirty-eight, reported an increase in the amount of record keeping in nongraded schools. Thirteen teachers did not feel that there was an increase in the amount of record keeping for their classes.

Only a few teachers, three, reported being provided with released time for keeping records. The remaining fifty reported they were not provided with released time.

More than one-half of the teachers, twenty-nine, felt that they did not have adequate help with keeping records, whereas the remaining twenty-four teachers felt that they had adequate help with this task.

In regard to grouping for instruction, all teachers, who responded, indicated that they considered the academic achievement of the child. The criteria considered in grouping were reported as follows:

| Criteria Considered in Grouping | Number Reported |
|---|---|
| Intelligence quotient | 14 |
| Chronological age | 17 |
| Academic achievement | 46 |
| Peer group | 15 |
| Physical development | 21 |
| Social maturity | 27 |
| Emotional maturity | 32 |
| Interests | 19 |

Twenty-eight teachers reported having an annual promotion in their schools. Twenty-four reported no annual promotion.

In regard to flexibility of grouping, forty-nine respondents indicated that their grouping was flexible. Two teachers reported they did not use flexible grouping.

Thirty-nine teachers reported that movement of pupils from one class to another was made whenever there was an indication that the growth of the child warranted such a change. Thirteen teachers reported that no such movement was made.

Most teachers reported spending one year with a group of children on the average. Teachers reported spending the following amounts of time with the same groups of children:

| Time Spent With Same Group | Number Reported |
|---|---|
| Less than one year | 0 |
| One school year | 39 |
| 2 school years | 2 |
| 3 school years | 0 |
| Until the child has mastered the skills taught | 8 |
| Until there is an indication that the child's growth warrants a change | 13 |

Ten statements of the case for and ten statements of the case against nongradedness were listed in the questionnaire. The respondents were requested to check two statements they felt were most applicable for the nongraded plan and two statements they felt were most applicable against the nongraded plan. The statements for nongrading most often marked by teachers was, "Recognition and provision for individual differences among children." The statement against nongrading most often marked was, "Widespread misuse and abuse of the terminology of nongradedness." The lists and teachers' indications follow:

## PROS AND CONS OF NONGRADEDNESS

### FOR NONGRADED SCHOOLS

46 Recognition and provision for individual differences among children.

0 Flexibility in administrative structure.

7 Abolition of artificial barriers of grades and promotion.

24 Respect for the continuity and interrelatedness of learning.

23 Student progress commensurate with ability.

5 Improved mental health for both teachers and students.

0 Stimulation for major curricular revision.

3 Harmony with the educational objectives of a democratic society.

0 Administrative feasibility for all levels and age groups.

2 Schools program-oriented rather than operationally controlled.

### AGAINST NONGRADED SCHOOLS

2 Soft pedagogy, lacking fixed standards and requirements.

2 Impossible burden on teachers.

9 Replacement of grade requirements by reading levels.

4 Lack of pupil progress information to parents.

19 Inadequacy and insufficiency of teacher preparation.

6 Absence of minimal standards and expectancies for all children.

5 Lack of specificity and order in curriculum sequence.

0 "An improved means to an unimproved end" - - Thoreau

8 Uncertainty that improved teaching will result.

37 Widespread misuse and abuse of the terminology of nongradedness.[1]

At the end of the teachers' questionnaires was a request for additional comments pertinent to the educational practices within their classrooms. The investigator grouped these statements into three categories: positive comments, negative comments, and suggestions. The following is a list of the positive comments:

1. Children seem happier, tensions are released.
2. The nongraded plan is extremely beneficial for students and teachers.
3. Children learn more in nongraded schools.
4. The intelligent child is given due consideration as well as the slow learner. Better self-concepts are developed.
5. Teachers are more relaxed because of the lack of pressure on them to push children, and because they do not have too many achievement levels in their rooms.

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[1] Ibid.

6. The stigma of failure is erased.
7. In team teaching children have more opportunity to interact with a variety of adults.
8. I love the nongraded plan and am grateful to be a part of it.
9. Our program is new and exciting. We are all thrilled.
10. A big asset in our school is teacher unity. We work and plan together.
11. I can see no disadvantages in nongrading.
12. I would find it next to impossible to go back to teach in a graded school.
13. The philosophy of teaching the individual at his own rate will always be my philosophy.
14. The nongraded program allows for the lags and spurts of growth in children.

The following negative comments were made:

1. There is too much testing in nongraded schools.
2. Parents are not ready for nongrading. There are many complaints.
3. Some superior children and their parents have inflated egos.
4. In our school the teachers have not changed their philosophies and practices.

5. Parents, teachers, children, and even the principal are still grade oriented.
6. Our school is not in a true sense nongraded.
7. The teachers had no choice or part in the nongrading of our school.

The following suggestions for improving nongraded plans were made by teachers:

1. We need more released time for preparation of lessons and materials.
2. We need well established behavioral goals for each subject area.
3. We need more in-service training.
4. We need more classrooms.
5. We need more materials.
6. Programmed reading is helpful.
7. More time is needed for teachers to get together and plan.
8. We need more accurate placement of children.
9. We need better methods of keeping records.
10. We need aides who are well trained and willing to work to help with individual students.

## III. SUMMARY

The administrators' questionnaires. The data were received from twenty-five administrators in twenty-five different school districts in Iowa. The respondents identified themselves as administrators who utilized nongraded organizational plans in their primary grades in one or more schools. The title most often used in the primaries was, "The Continuous Progress Plan." The original desire for the nongraded structure had emerged from administrators in all but two districts. More than half of the respondents reported that the desire for the nongraded plan also emerged from teachers. A few said parents were instrumental in getting it started. Almost half of the districts first implemented the nongraded structure in all primary levels. Slightly more than one-third of the districts started with one or more pilot schools. A few of the administrators reported implementing the plan in all first grades. Most administrators spent six months to one year in initiating the plan in their schools. One-third of the respondents indicated that they spent over a year but less than two years in initiation. A few districts reported spending less than six months and a few reported spending over two years initiating this plan.

The length of time the nongraded primaries had been in operation was over five years in most cases. In general the

grades replaced by the nongraded structure were first through third grades; however, most administrators reported having difficulty removing the grade labels in their schools.

Six administrators reported spending one year in orienting the faculty. Others reports ranged from spending eight or ten hours to spending three years in faculty orientation. Six administrators spent six months or less in faculty orientation. Only three administrators reported spending over one year. All but five administrators reported holding periodic reorientation sessions.

The media most often used for orientation of parents and the general public were special meetings, parent-teacher meetings, and newspapers. Four administrators reported using the services of consultant. One administrator reported that he used no facilities.

All but one administrator reported using a curriculum designed for levels. All districts involved administrators and teachers in curriculum development. Over half the administrators used the services of curriculum specialists and over half used consultants' services. There were two administrators who involved the parents, and three who involved the children in curriculum development. Twenty administrators reported constant revision of their curricula. Most administrators reported that their curriculum development was done after school hours. The administrators in

fifteen school districts reported working on curriculum development in the summer and ten administrators reported providing released time for their teachers during the school year to work on curriculum.

Classroom grouping procedures in nongraded schools were reported as about half self-contained and half semi-self-contained. Team teaching was utilized by twelve of the administrators. Most administrators reported that personalities were considered in their grouping practices.

As to the academic subjects nongraded, all administrators reported the nongrading of reading. Most of them reported nongrading spelling, arithmetic, writing, and language. About one-half reported nongrading social studies. Slightly more than one-third nongraded science and slightly less than one-third nongraded music, art, and physical education.

The number of achievement levels indicated by nearly all of the administrators was from six to fifteen. These levels were established in at least part of their subjects.

Two-thirds of the administrators reported no provisions for remedial instruction.

About one-half of the administrators indicated that there were no provisions made in their nongraded schools for special education of the retarded.

The use of the services of elementary guidance counselors was not available in many of the nongraded plans surveyed. About one-fourth of the administrators reported utilizing these services.

In regard to the length of time spent in the nongraded primary, most administrators stated that there was no required time for students to complete the nongraded primary. About one-third of the administrators insisted on pupils spending at least three years in the nongraded primary.

Administrators reported that some children needed more than three years to complete the primary. The respondents' reports ranged from one per cent of the pupils to twenty per cent of the pupils needing more time in the primary. Most respondents reported from four to six per cent of the children took more time to complete the primary program.

In regard to children needing less time to complete the primary, ten administrators reported that pupils never were moved into fourth grade without first spending three years in the primary. Other reports of pupils taking less than three years to complete the primary ranged from one per cent of the pupils to ten per cent. According to the data, there was a larger percentage of children who needed more time to complete the primary than the percentage of children who needed less time. Seventeen administrators reported

having some pupils who were not ready to go on after three years in the primary. About one-third of the administrators reported that they had very few who were not ready to advance.

Regarding problems with slow learners, the majority of administrators indicated that there were no problems. The five administrators who reported problems said the lack of understanding on the part of the parents was the chief source of their difficulties.

Most administrators experienced no problems with acceleration. The three administrators who indicated that they did have problems reported that the children who were advanced were not quite socially mature enough to adjust well in the classroom with older children.

In this study, almost all administrators reported holding parent-teacher conferences in their schools. About half the administrators reported using letter grades and half reported using checklists. Virtually all of the administrators said that recording progress took more time in the nongraded school than in the graded school. In only ten districts was there provided released time for teachers for record keeping. Nearly all administrators indicated that the nongraded plan made more demands on the administrator of these programs.

As to the attitudes toward nongrading, all but one administrator reported that they would recommend the nongraded

plan. All, but one administrator, indicated that their teachers were in favor of the plan and all but one said the parents were favorable toward nongrading.

Of the ten statements listed in favor of nongrading, the majority of the administrators checked as most applicable, "Recognition and provision for individual differences among children."

Of the ten statements listed against nongrading, the majority of the administrators checked as most applicable, "Widespread misuse and abuse of the terminology of nongradedness."

The problems encountered most often when implementing nongraded plans were reported in the following order: (1) orienting teachers to the plan, (2) orienting parents, and (3) securing adequate instructional materials.

The factors which contributed most to successful implementation of the nongraded plans were reported in the following order: (1) cooperation and interested staff, (2) cooperation of parents, and (3) adequate preparation of plan before initiation.

The suggestions most often made by administrators in regard to the establishment of a nongraded plan were given in the following order: (1) take plenty of time for the orientation of teachers and parents, (2) provide the teachers with more in-service training, (3) visit and study the

nongraded plans of other schools, and (4) make sure the total staff accepts the nongraded plan.

There is a need for more research to be conducted in regard to the benefits of the nongraded school Administrators reported that research was being conducted in ten districts. The remaining fifteen reported no research being conducted.

The teachers' questionnaires. The data were received from fifty-three primary teachers in nongraded schools in Iowa. Most of these teachers had taught over seven years in elementary schools. Thirty of them had taught over eleven years. The length of time taught in nongraded schools for most respondents was three years or over. Most of the teachers had been involved in the planning of their nongraded schools from the start. Most had been involved in curriculum development, although few were given released time for this task. Slightly over one-half of the teachers felt that there was a need for more curriculum planning in their schools. Most of the teachers taught all elementary academic subjects with the exception of music and physical education. One-half of the teachers had some assistance in the classroom. Most of the teachers felt very enthusiastic about their nongraded schools. Nearly all the teachers reported that they felt the nongraded program was instrumental in developing better

self-concepts in the children. Almost all felt the academic progress of the pupils was greater in the nongraded school than in the graded school. All but two felt that this plan more adequately met the needs of the individual child. Two-thirds of the teachers reported that the pressures of achieving academic standards had been eliminated or remarkably reduced.

Regarding teaching procedures, the majority of teachers reported using democratic procedures, individualized instruction, and primarily activities methods. All but one viewed their role as that of a learning counselor rather than as a disseminator of information. The majority reported flexible grouping within their classrooms and movement from one class group to another whenever there was an indication of the need. Twenty-one respondents indicated that they taught from twenty to twenty-five students daily. Some taught fewer than twenty students daily. Fourteen taught from twenty-six to thirty students daily, and twelve taught over thirty-one daily. Practically all the teachers reported remaining with one group of students for only one school year; however, thirteen reported remaining with one group until their growth warranted a change. A majority of the classrooms were reported as having more than four achievement levels. The small group plan for instruction was the plan most frequently used in one-half the classrooms. About one-half of the

teachers indicated that they set up goals for the individual child. These teachers considered intelligence quotient, academic achievement, social maturity, physical development, emotional maturity, and chronological age when establishing goals. The following factors were considered by most teachers when grouping children: academic achievement, social maturity, and emotional maturity. Some teachers considered intelligence quotient, chronological age, peer group, physical development, and the child's interests. Almost three-fourths of the teachers reported that the children did not remain at one level until they had mastered all the skills listed at that level. Most reported that the children did not skip levels, nor did they repeat materials already mastered, other than for regular review.

Approximately two-thirds of the teachers required the pupils to do make-up work if they had been absent. All but two of the teachers felt that the children were grouped so they could experience success. Regarding the group of children that the teachers felt benefited most from non-grading, the answers were in the following frequency order: (1) all children equally benefit, (2) children classified as slow learners receive more benefit, (3) children with below average ability receive more benefit, (4) children with superior ability benefit more, and (5) children with average ability receive more benefit.

In regard to the materials used in these nongraded schools, nearly all teachers reported using graded instructional materials. More than one-half of the teachers indicated that they used programmed instructional materials. More than one-half reported having a sufficient quantity and variety of self-teaching and self-testing materials. All teachers reported using similar materials to reinforce learning rather than using the same materials. Virtually all the teachers reported using standardized tests in their classrooms. Nearly all reported administering periodic tests to help them place children in the proper levels. More than one-half of the teachers felt that they had adequate evaluation devices.

The majority of the teachers found that the nongraded plan created an increase in the amount of time needed for keeping records. More than one-half of the teachers reported they did not have adequate help with record keeping. Only three teachers indicated that they had released time for keeping records.

The reporting systems most often used were parent-teacher conferences combined with letter grades. About one-half of the teachers made out check lists of skills. Some issued descriptive comments or letters. Most teachers reported holding frequent teachers' meetings to discuss special concerns of the nongraded school.

Regarding the promotion of children, a little over half of the teachers reported holding annual promotions.

# CHAPTER IV

# SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

## I. SUMMARY

It was the purpose of this study to investigate and report on the nongraded organizational plan as to: (1) definition of the nongraded plan, (2) history of the nongraded plan in the United States, (3) research evidence in support of and against the plan, (4) progress of the nongraded primary plan adoption in the schools of Iowa, (5) extent of successful implementation of this plan in the schools of Iowa, and (6) recommendations for implementation and conduction of a nongraded organizational plan.

A research of the professional literature on the nongraded plan was conducted. Experimental studies were critically reviewed. The Iowa State Department of Public Instruction was contacted for a list of the school districts in Iowa which operated a nongraded organizational plan. Questionnaires were sent to an administrator and two teachers in each of the sixty districts listed. A total of 180 questionnaires was mailed out. One hundred twenty-five questionnaires were returned--a 69.4 per cent return. Of the respondents returning questionnaires, 37.6 per cent stated they did not have a nongraded school that would meet the definition of a nongraded plan as set forth in this

report. The data presented in this report were taken from the 62.4 per cent that utilize a nongraded primary plan somewhat similar to the plan defined in this report. The progress of the nongraded plan adoption in Iowa school districts was based upon the reports from the questionnaires that were returned. The report of the extent of successful implementation of this plan in Iowa schools was based upon the replies on the questionnaires. Recommendations for implementation and conduction of a nongraded organizational plan were based upon the literature and upon comments and suggestions made by the respondents.

As to the definition of the nongraded plan, the investigator adopted the Myers and Klein description, which emphasizes the groupings of learners by many criteria in an organizational pattern that allows each learner to develop capabilities unhampered by grade barriers.

In review of the history of the nongraded plan, the investigator found that the earliest schools in America were nongraded. Later, educational leaders became concerned about the lack of standards in the school districts. They searched for a plan to standardize the organization and educational practices of district schools. The Prussian graded-school plan was adopted. The Quincy Grammar School, which opened in 1848, set the pattern of the graded school. The graded plan had not existed long before educators began

to question its merit. As interest in child development and learning theory increased, so did the search for more adequate means of educating the individual. The most profound effort to break the lock-step was the nongraded movement. The earliest attempt to ungrade the school was made in Western Springs, Illinois, in 1934. This plan has since been discontinued. It appears that the plan begun in Milwaukee in 1942 is the oldest of the nongraded plans now in effect. Very few schools attempted nongrading before 1947, but since that time, the movement has grown quite rapidly.

In regard to the research evidence reviewed in support of or against the nongraded plan, the investigator found that although the data were inadequate and inconclusive, findings were, in the main, favorable to the plan.

The progress of the nongraded plan adoption in the school districts of Iowa was not accurately determined due to the lack of a 100 per cent return of the questionnaires. Jeffries found there were twenty-one school districts in Iowa during the 1964-65 school year utilizing at least one nongraded plan. Her report was taken from a 100 per cent return of her questionnaires. This investigator received a seventy per cent return and found an increase of four district adoptions of the nongraded program within the last five years.

Regarding the extent of successful implementation of the nongraded primary plans in Iowa, the investigator found that virtually all of the administrators reported success with their programs. Of the fifty-three teacher respondents, thirty-four reported that they were very enthusiastic over their nongraded plans. A vast majority of the teachers appeared to be making an effort to meet the demands of the nongraded theory.

## II. CONCLUSIONS

Based on a seventy per cent return, this investigator found an increase of four district adoptions of the nongraded plan within the last five years.

The administrators reported that the nongraded plan placed more demands upon the administrator, yet all but one recommended it. Teachers also reported an increase in time spent on planning and record keeping, yet most indicated that they were very enthusiastic over nongrading.

All but one administrator indicated that they felt the teachers were favorable toward nongrading. These data are in accord with the findings of Hopkins, Halliwell, Provus, and Jones.

Almost all teachers indicated that they felt the children in nongraded plans had formed better self-concepts. This indication by the teachers was in accordance with the findings of Goodlad, Austin, and the Milwaukee Study.

All but a few teachers reported that they felt pupil academic achievement was greater in nongraded schools. This indication was in accord with the Appleton, Halliwell, Ingram, Skapski, Zerby, Hart, Provus, and Brody studies.

Almost all teachers indicated that the nongraded plan more adequately met the needs of the individual. Halliwell and Goodlad reported that teachers were more aware of individual differences in the nongraded schools.

Two-thirds of the teachers reported that the pressures for achieving academic standards had been eliminated or remarkably reduced. Austin reported reduced tensions of children in his study.

All but two teachers indicated that the children in their schools were grouped so they could experience success. Anastasiow stressed the importance of grouping children near their level of achievement.

In regard to the relative amount of benefit received from nongrading by children of different ability groups, the teachers in this survey indicated that they thought all children benefited equally. This was in accord with Skapski's findings.

It appears that virtually all of the administrators and a majority of the teachers of the nongraded primary schools who responded in this survey were endeavoring to conduct a nongraded program that meets the challenge of providing for continuous progress of all pupils.

## III. RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations for implementation and conduction of a nongraded plan were made by administrators and teachers. The suggestions most often made by administrators were given in the following order: (1) take plenty of time for the orientation of teachers and parents, (2) provide more in-service training for teachers, (3) visit and study the non-graded plans of other schools, and (4) make sure the plan is accepted by the total staff.

Teachers expressed the need for better designed curricula, more assistance in their classrooms, more help with record keeping, released time for planning, and more instructional materials. Their expression was in accordance with views of Carbone and Provus.

Carbone emphasized that the organizational plan alone was not enough to improve the achievement of pupils; it must be accompanied by appropriate adaptations in instructional practices of teachers, including the supplying of many materials. Provus indicated the need for curriculum revision and in-service training for teachers.

In keeping with the views of administrators, teachers, and authorities on nongrading, the investigator recommends that there be an orientation period of sufficient length to insure the understanding and acceptance of the plan before it is implemented. In-service training for teachers should

be provided. The curriculum should be developed into sequential skill development units to accommodate the levels of achievement rather than the traditional grade levels. Teachers using an individualized approach with their students in many academic subject areas need classroom assistance or smaller class enrollments. They also need released time for curricular and instructional planning.

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# APPENDICES

# APPENDIX A

## LETTER TO ADMINISTRATORS

Dear Educator:

The progress of the nongraded school in Iowa is of interest to many educators. I am presently making my field report on this topic in completion of the requirements for a Master's Degree in Education from Drake University.

The State Department of Public Instruction has reported that there are now sixty school districts in the State of Iowa that employ the nongraded or continuous progress plan in their elementary schools. My study will be limited to these school districts so it is pertinent that all questionnaires be completed and returned. My purpose is not to elect or reject the nongraded plan but to research the educational practices of these plans in Iowa.

Will you please help me obtain the requested information? Please complete the enclosed Administrator's questionnaire and ask two teachers of the nongraded primary to complete the enclosed Teacher's Questionnaires. I am enclosing a self-addressed envelope for each questionnaire. I would appreciate it if these could be returned by May 12, 1970.

Thank you for your help and cooperation. I will be happy to send you a summary of my research if you so request.

Sincerely,

Torrey Kayser
Creston, Iowa

## APPENDIX B

## ADMINISTRATOR'S QUESTIONNAIRE

PLEASE CHECK THE ITEM OR ITEMS IN EACH QUESTION THAT MOST ADEQUATELY DESCRIBE YOUR NONGRADED PRIMARY PLAN.

1. What is the total enrollment of your nongraded primary?

___ less than 50 children
___ 50 to 100 children
___ 101 to 200 children
___ 201 to 300 children
___ over 300 children

2. What do you call your nongraded plan?

___ nongraded
___ continuous progress
___ ungraded
___ primary unit plan
___ other, please specify_____

3. How long has your nongraded system been in operation?

___less than one year
___1 year to 2 years
___2 years to 3 years
___3 years to 4 years
___4 years to 5 years
___over 5 years

4. What previous graded structure in your school has been replaced by the nongraded structure?

___kindergarten through third
___first grade through third
___other, please specify_____

5. Are grade labels entirely removed?

___yes
___no
___still striving for this

6. How many academic subjects are nongraded? Please check each one.

___reading
___spelling
___arithmetic
___writing
___language
___other_____

___social studies
___music
___art
___physical education
___science

7. If you have different levels of achievement in your nongraded primary, how many levels does your plan have?

___less than 5 levels
___6 to 10 levels
___11 to 15 levels
___16 to 20 levels
___21 to 25 levels
___over 25 levels

8. How many teachers are involved in the nongraded plan in your school?

___5 teachers or less
___6 to 10 teachers
___11 to 20 teachers
___over 20 teachers

9. Do you have special remedial instruction for any children in your primary?

___yes ___no

10. Are there any of your primary children enrolled in special education classes?

___yes ___no

11. Is there a required amount of time a child must spend in the nongraded primary?
___yes, please state_____
___no

12. What is the <u>average</u> length of time in which a child completes the nongraded primary?

___2 school years
___3 school years
___4 school years
___5 or more years

13. The desire for the nongraded plan emerged from: (please check one or more)

___administrators
___teachers
___parents
___others, please state _____

14. How much time did you spend on orientation of your faculty to the nongraded plan? Please state: _____

15. Do you, or did you, provide in-service training for the teachers in the nongraded plan?

___yes ___no

16. What media were used to orient the public to the non-graded school?

___special meetings
___PTA discussions
___consultants
___radio
___news articles

17. Do you hold periodic meetings for reorientation purposes?

___yes ___no

18. How was nongraded first implemented?

___in one or more pilot schools
___at all primary levels
___in all 1st. grades
___at all elementary levels
___other, please state_____

19. Approximately how long did it take your school to initiate a nongraded primary?

____less than 6 months
____6 months to a year
____over a year but less than 2 years
____over 2 years

20. What was your most difficult problem to overcome when implementing the nongraded plan?

21. What contributed most to your successful implementation?

22. What advice would you give to other school systems contemplating the nongraded plan?

23. Is the curriculum for your nongraded school designed to provide instruction for different levels rather than for grades?

___yes ___no

24. Do you feel that the nongraded structure in your school provides for the continuous vertical progress of each pupil?

___yes ___no

25. Please check each group involved in curriculum development.

___administrators
___teachers
___specialists
___others
___parents
___children
___consultants

26. When is your curriculum planned?
___after school hours
___summer
___released time from school
___other, please state_____

27. Is your curriculum under constant revision and change?

___yes ___no

28. What type of teaching plan do you use?

___self-contained classroom
___semi-self-contained
___departmentalized
___team teaching
___other, please state_____

29. If using a self-contained class plan, how long is the teacher with the same group of children? (in most cases)

___less than one year
___one year
___2 years
___3 years
___more than 3 years

30. In assigning pupils to teachers (if self-contained) are personalities considered?

___yes ___no

31. Do you employ elementary guidance counselors?

___yes, ratio_____ ___no

32. Approximately what percentage of children require more than 3 years to complete the nongraded primary (excluding kindergarten)?

_____

33. Approximately what percentage of children require less than 3 years to complete the nongraded primary?

_____

34. Do you have problems with those who complete the program slowly?

___yes ___no
If answered yes, please specify_____
_____

35. Do you have problems with acceleration?

___yes ___no
If answered yes, please specify_____
_____

36. Do you have children who still are not ready to advance after 4 years in the primary?

___yes ___no
If answered yes, please explain your procedure briefly.

37. Did the conversion to the nongraded primary necessitate any change in your method of recording pupil progress?

___yes ___no

38. Do you find more time is spent on collecting and recording information about each pupil?

___yes ___no

39. Do you administer standardized achievement tests?

___yes ___no

40. Are teachers given released time for record keeping?

___yes ___no

41. Please check your grading and reporting system.

___letter grades (A, B, C, etc.)
___letter grades (S, L, U, etc.)
___numbers indicating grades
___parent-teacher conferences
___checklists
___home visits
___other, please specify_____

42. Is research on the nongraded plan being conducted in your school?

___yes ___no

43. If research has been done, are the results available?

___yes ___no
If answered yes, please advise on how to obtain this data

44. Is there any available handbook on your nongraded program?

___yes ___no
If answered yes, please advise how to order handbook

45. Does the nongraded plan place greater demands upon the administration?

___yes ___no
Comments:

46. As an administrator, do you recommend the nongraded plan?

___yes ___no

47. Do you feel that the teachers in your school are in favor of the nongraded plan?

___yes ___no
Comments:

48. Do you think the parents are in support of the nongraded plan?

___yes ___no
Comments:

49. Additional comments concerning the educational practices in your nongraded primary.

50. On the following page are listed ten statements of the case for and ten statements of the case against nongradedness. Please check two statements you feel are most important for nongraded and two that you feel are most applicable against the nongraded school.

# PROS AND CONS OF NONGRADEDNESS

## FOR NONGRADED SCHOOLS

_____ Recognition and provision for individual differences among children.

_____ Flexibility in administrative structure.

_____ Abolition of artificial barriers of grades and promotion.

_____ Respect for the continuity and interrelatedness of learning.

_____ Student progress commensurate with ability.

_____ Improved mental health for both teachers and students.

_____ Stimulation for major curricular revision.

_____ Harmony with the educational objectives of a democratic society.

_____ Administrative feasibility for all levels and age groups.

## AGAINST NONGRADED SCHOOLS

_____ Soft pedagogy, lacking fixed standards and requirements.

_____ Impossible burden on teachers.

_____ Replacement of grade requirements by reading levels.

_____ Lack of pupil progress information to parents.

_____ Inadequacy and insufficiency of teacher preparation.

_____ Absence of minimal standards and expectancies for all children.

_____ Lack of specificity and order in curriculum sequence.

_____ "An improved means to an unimporved end" - - Thoreau

_____ Uncertainty that improved teaching will result.

_____ Widespread misuse and abuse of the terminology of nongradedness.[1]

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[1]Stuart E. Dean, "Nongraded Schools," U. S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, Office of Education, Educational Brief, No. 1. (Washington, D. C.: Government Printing Office, July, 1964).

## APPENDIX C

### TEACHER'S QUESTIONNAIRE

PLEASE CHECK THE ITEM IN EACH QUESTION THAT MOST ADEQUATELY DESCRIBES THE NONGRADED PRIMARY PLAN WITHIN YOUR CLASSROOM.

1. How long have you been an elementary teacher?

___less than 1 year
___1 year
___2 to 3 years
___4 to 6 years
___7 to 10 years
___11 to 15 years
___16 to 20 years
___over 20 years

2. How long have you been teaching in a nongraded primary?

___less than 1 year
___1 to 2 years
___3 years
___4 years
___5 years
___over 5 years

3. Were you involved in planning for your nongraded school from the start?

___yes
___no

4. How many children per day do you teach?

___less than 20
___20 to 25
___26 to 30
___31 to 35
___36 to 40
___41 to 50
___51 to 60
___61 to 70
___71 to 100
___100 or more

5. Check each academic subject you teach during the school week.

___reading
___spelling
___language
___arithmetic
___science
___social studies
___art
___music
___physical education
___other, please state_____
_____

6. Has your school curriculum been revised for the nongraded plan?

___yes
___no

7. Do you feel that your curriculum is well planned for each level in your nongraded program?

___yes
___fairly well planned
___needs complete revision

8. Are you involved in curriculum development?

___yes ___no

9. Are you allowed released time for curriculum development?

___yes ___no

10. Do you use graded instructional materials?

___yes ___no

11. Do you use programmed instruction?

___yes ___no

12. Do you utilize educational television?

___yes ___no

13. What is the range of the graded instructional materials used in your classroom? Check each level used.

___readiness materials
___first grade
___second grade
___third grade
___fourth grade
___fifth grade
___sixth grade
___above sixth grade

14. Do you have a sufficient quantity of self-teaching and self-testing materials?

___yes ___no

15. Do you feel that you have varied materials to successfully adjust for individualized instruction?

___have plenty of materials
___need more materials

16. To reinforce learning, do you use the same materials over or do you use similar materials?

___same materials ___similar materials

17. How much do you have assistance in the classroom?

___not at all
___less than 1 hour weekly
___1 to 3 hours weekly
___4 to 6 hours weekly
___7 to 10 hours weekly
___11 to 20 hours weekly
___over 20 hours weekly

18. In teaching, do you feel you use:

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| democratic procedures? | ___yes | ___no |
| individualized instruction? | ___yes | ___no |
| primarily lecture methods? | ___yes | ___no |
| primarily activities methods? | ___yes | ___no |

19. Do you view the role of the teacher as a disseminator of information?

___yes ___no

20. Do you view the role of the teacher as that of a learning counselor?

___yes ___no

21. Do you feel enthusiastic about the nongraded program?
___yes, very
___yes, somewhat
___no

22. Do you administer standardized tests to the children within your classroom?

___yes ___no

23. Do you administer periodic tests to help determine the placement of each child?

___yes ___no

24. Does every child remain at one level until he has mastered all the listed skills at that level?

___yes ___no

25. Do children ever skip levels?

___yes ___no

26. Do children ever repeat materials already mastered? (other than for regular review)

___yes ___no

27. Do the children who have been absent from school have make-up work to do?

___yes ___no

28. What method of instruction is used most frequently in your classroom?

___whole class instruction
___small group instruction
___individual instruction

29. What is the age range of the children you teach? Please check each age child you teach.

___4 years old
___5 years old
___6 years old
___7 years old
___8 years old
___9 years old
___10 years old
___11 years old
___over 11 years old

30. Do the children in your class ever speak of "failing" or "not passing?"

___yes ___no

31. Do you feel as if the nongraded program helps in the development of a better self-concept in the pupils?

___yes ___no

32. Do you feel as if the children's progress in learning is greater and more continuous with a nongraded than with a graded system?

___yes ___no

33. Do you feel that the children are grouped so that they can experience success?

___yes ___no

34. Have the pressures of achievement and maintaining academic standards been eliminated of remarkably reduced?

___yes ___no

35. Do you think the nongraded primary more adequately meets the needs of each individual child?

___yes ___no

36. Which children do you feel benefit most from the non-graded plan?
___all equally benefit
___children with average ability
___children with superior ability
___children with below average ability
___children classified as slow learners

37. Do you feel that you have better teacher-parent rapport with a nongraded primary system?

___yes ___no

38. Do you have adequate evaluation devices? (to measure the skills to be attained at each level)

___yes ___no

39. How many reading levels are there in your classroom?

___less than 3 ___4 levels
___3 levels ___more than 4 levels

40. Do you hold frequent teacher's meetings to discuss special concerns of the nongraded plan?

___yes ___no

41. Do you issue a report card during the school year?

___yes ___no
(If yes, I would appreciate a sample copy.)

42. What grading system do you use? Check each one used.
___percentages ___S, L, U
___A, B, C, D, F ___Checklists
___skill cards ___descriptive comments
___parent-teacher conferences
___other, please state_____

43. Do you use skill cards listing all the skills to be mastered during the primary years?

___yes ___no

44. Have you established individualized goals for each pupil?

___yes ___no

45. Check each area considered when setting up goals for pupils.

___intelligence quotient ___physical development
___academic achievement ___emotional maturity
___social maturity ___chronological age

46. Do you find an increase in the amount of record keeping?

___yes ___no

47. Are you provided released time for record keeping?

___yes ___no
(If yes, how much time weekly?)_____

48. Do you have adequate help with record keeping?

___yes ___no

49. By what criteria do you group children? Check each used.

___intelligence quotient ___physical development
___chronological age ___social maturity
___academic achievement ___emotional maturity
___peer group ___interests

50. Do you have an annual promotion?

___yes ___no
If answered no, what do you do? _____

51. Is the grouping within your classroom flexible?

___yes ___no

52. Is the movement from one class group to another made whenever there is an indication that a child's growth warrants such a change?

___yes ___no

53. For what period of time do you teach the same group of children?

___less than one school year
___1 school year
___2 years
___3 years
___4 years
___until the child has mastered the skills taught in your class
___until there is an indication that a child's growth warrants a change

54. I would appreciate any additional comments pertinent to the educational practices within your nongraded primary classroom.

55. Ten statements of the case for and ten statements of the case against nongradedness are listed on the following page. Please check two statements you feel are most applicable for nongraded and two that you feel are most applicable against the nongraded school.

## PROS AND CONS OF NONGRADEDNESS

### FOR NONGRADED SCHOOLS

_____ Recognition and provision for individual differences among children.

_____ Flexibility in administrative structure.

_____ Abolition of artificial barriers of grades and promotion.

_____ Respect for the continuity and interrelatedness of learning.

_____ Student progress commensurate with ability.

_____ Improved mental health for both teachers and students.

_____ Stimulation for major curricular revision.

_____ Harmony with the educational objectives of a democratic society.

_____ Administrative feasibility for all levels and age groups.

_____ Schools program-oriented rather than operationally controlled.

### AGAINST NONGRADED SCHOOLS

_____ Soft pedagogy, lacking fixed standards and requirements.

_____ Impossible burden on teachers.

_____ Replacement of grade requirements by reading levels.

_____ Lack of pupil progress information to parents.

_____ Inadequacy and insufficiency of teacher preparation.

_____ Absence of minimal standards and expectancies for all children.

_____ Lack of specificity and order in curriculum sequence.

_____ "An improved means to an unimproved end" - - Thoreau

_____ Uncertainty that improved teaching will result.

_____ Widespread misuse and abuse of the terminology of nongradedness.[1]

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[1] Ibid.